MUTINY

A PAPER OF ANARCHISTIC IDEAS & ACTIONS
ISSUE #31 OCTOBER 2008

Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committe Callout

The Financial Crisis of 2008

The Iraqi Slaughter & The Case for Australian War Crimes Trials

Empowering the Heartland. Empowered by the Heartland: Together we will stop the NT Intervention

FREE

Mutiny is an anarchist collective based in Sydney. We started this zine to explore different avenues of disobedience & resistance, & to encourage people to write about their ideas, actions & experiences.

Mutiny began as an anti-war collective. We're currently exploring ways to resist gentrification, in particular the 'redevelopment' proposed in the Redfern area by the Redfern Waterloo Authority. We're keen to work with other people opposed to this redevelopment & the displacement, racism, rent hikes & ugliness it involves. We meet regularly: please contact us on the address below.

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Back issues at **www.jura.org.au/mutiny** - more coming soon.

Editors this month: Dumpstered Twin, Mambutu, Max Solidarity, SourDough, Graf Cat, Princess Mob

(The mutiny zine collective does not necessarily agree with all the opinions of contributors. Contributors do not necessarily agree with all the opinions of the mutiny collective. The mutiny collective doesn't agree with all the opinions of the mutiny collective.)

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BRIEF NEWS

Brisbane: Lex Wotton on Trial

Palm Island man Lex Wotton is currently on trial for "riot with destruction" in Brisbane Supreme court. The police are trying to present him as the ringleader of protests, which over 300 residents took part in, during which the courthouse, police station and police barracks were burnt down.

The riot followed the death in custody of Mulrunji Doomadgee, who was arrested by Senior Sergeant Chris Hurley for 'public nuisance' on the morning of November 19. Within an hour, he was dead on the floor of a cell in the Palm Island police station – he had contusions to his face and head, four broken ribs and a torn portal vein. His liver had been almost cleaved in two by a massive blunt force trauma. A pathologist's report initially found that his death was an accident.

The prosecution have been trying to convince the court that events prior to the day of the riots were not relevant to the case. However, the defence have been successful in introducing some material that puts events into context.

They showed video footage of a number of speeches given by Palm Island residents expressing anger over Mulrunji's death and other Aboriginal deaths in custody. The footage included a speech given by an eyewitness who saw Hurley assault Mulrunji. Roy Bramwell told the crowd that when he was in the Palm Island police station he saw Snr Sgt Hurley repeatedly punching Mulrunji while he was lying on the floor, and saying 'do you want more Mr Doomadgee, do you want more?' "If I'd have stood up and said something they'd have took me in the cell and done the same thing to me," Mr Bramwell said.

Tiana Friday, Lex Wotton's niece, gave evidence of how the police coerced her into giving a statement implicating Lex in the riots. She said that the police took her from her house in her nightgown, entered two other houses without warrants or permission and held her until the evening without giving her any food. She told the court that she would have "said anything" to get out of police custody.

The trial is continuing as this zine goes to print. For updates, see the National Indigenous Times:

http://www.nit.com.au/

Melbourne: Barwon 13 trial

In Australia's biggest terrorism trial, involving thirteen Muslim men, seven were found guilty of belonging to a terrorist group, four were acquitted, and the jury could not agree about one defendant, who will be retried. A thirteenth man pleaded guilty several months ago, was sentenced to five years jail and acted as a prosecution witness.

There was no evidence that these men had plans to harm anyone or damage any property. The only evidence of any actual plans was provided by a single witness who was discredited by the judge. The jury apparently decided that the conversations the men had had with each other could be defined as "indirectly fostering" a terrorist act.

The twelve men had been kept in extremely harsh conditions for the three years since their arrest. Their sentencing will begin on November 20.

Melbourne, NZ: Low Paid Workers Fight Back

In Melbourne, UNITE, which defines itself as "a fighting union that represents fast food and retail workers in Victoria" has held a number of successful protests against 7-Eleven.

Most 7-Eleven workers are only paid around $10 per hour, and at some stores people are paid as little as $8 an hour (significantly less than the minimum wage of $14 an hour). Employees are often forced to do unpaid "trial" work.

UNITE organisers have made it clear to 7-Eleven head office that the actions – which stop people entering stores and lose the company significant amounts of money, as well as damaging their reputation – will continue on a regular basis until they make a proper commitment to stop breaking the law.

Across the Tasman, there were strikes at McDonald's in Auckland and Hamilton, as part of a campaign by the NZ UNITE union aimed at raising wages and ending the bullying of staff. The strikes started on September 19th, with workers from Otara McDonald's accompanied on the picket line by a giant inflatable rat. October 3rd saw staff at six different McDonald's walk out, five in Auckland and one in Hamilton. The striking workers at the Auckland Airport McDonald's travelled into the city to support strikers at two other stores, while when the Hamilton strikers left their store, only mangers who were specially brought in from Auckland, 130km away, were left running the store. During these strikes, which lasted for several hours or longer, many customers left without food rather than cross the picket lines.

Australia, Virtual Strip Search Technology to be Trialed in Airports

A new security technology will be trialled in Airports in Melbourne, Sydney and Adelaide. This technology allows security personnel to see what lies under a person's clothes. "It provides detailed images of a person's body … which many people might find highly embarrassing," said Stephen Blanks, of the NSW Council for Civil Liberties.

"It's not normal for security to require strip searches of people getting on aeroplanes, and why should this virtual strip search become the norm?"

During the trial, passengers will have the ability to choose between the current standard security measures and the new x-ray technology.

The trial run will finish at the end of November.

South Australia, Inmates Riot Over Conditions at Port Augusta Prison

On the 10th October, approximately 38 high security inmates in Port Augusta prison overpowered guards and rioted after a recreational session was cancelled.

The cancellation was due to under-staffing caused by overcrowding in the prison. Some inmates were sent to the infirmary because there were not enough bunks in the high security section of the prison. Extra staff needed to be moved to the infirmary causing a lack of staff for

supervision for the inmates fortnightly trip to an oval.

The inmates rioted after news of the cancellation.

Some were on the prison roof with banners printed on mattresses and other materials – one of them read "No More DCS bashings" and others pointed to overcrowding as the cause of the disturbances. It was reported that windows, air conditioners and computers were smashed during the riot.

A majority of the prisoners who rioted have since returned to cells in the jail. About five who are believed to have instigated the uprising, are in police custody at the Adelaide Remand Centre. Police are treating the Bluebush unit of Port Augusta prison as a crime scene. (We already know all jails are crimes – we don't need cops to tell us that...).

Opposition correctional services spokesman Stephen Wade said the prison system was running at 22 per cent overcrowding, with the Port Augusta jail having 83 more prisoners than its recommended capacity.

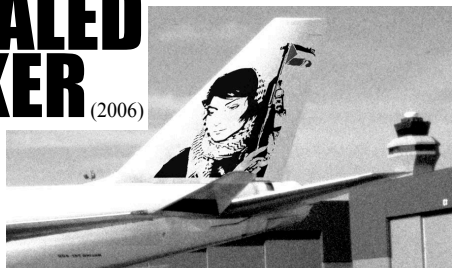
Black Rose Film Nights

BATTLE IN SEATTLE (2008)

A fictionalised account of the mass protest against the WTO (World Trade Organisation). It follows five people during those five days in 1999 as demonstrators took over Seattle's streets.

Runtime: 98 mins, Movie

LEILA KHALED HIJACKER (2006)



Lina Makboul's meeting with her former teenage idol, the first female hijacker Leila Khaled has resulted in a totally magnificent documentary.

With an editing and archive footage that other documentary filmmakers only dream about, history and present are connected.

Makboul's personal tone and Khaled's lack of guilt puts the question of commitment on it's edge. The result is an initiated and balanced portrait that shows the people behind the act, behind the "terrorist".

Runtime: 61 mins, Documentary

Black Rose Anarchist Library & Bookshop

open: thursday & friday 11-7
saturday & sunday 11-5
22 Enmore Rd
(100m from Newtown Station)
e: blackrosebooks@yahoo.com.au
p: 0424 490 792

accessibility: there are three steps at the entrance. the toilet is not easily accessible

Battle in Seattle showing on Sunday 26 October @ 6.30pm & **Leila Khaled: Hijacker** showing on Sunday 2 November @ 6.30pm

Empowering the Heartland. Empowered by the Heartland.

Together we will stop the NT Intervention

by galikali

With Respect to all Sovereign Aboriginal lands of this vast continent.
Respect to all traditional owners, present and past, the history and misery that lasts.
This article was written on Wangal country, Eora Nation.
Sovereignty never ceded, spirit never defeated.

The NT Intervention, an aggressive policy of assimilation and dispossession introduced by Howard in June last year, has fired up resistance in affected NT Aboriginal communities from the depths of the Heartland to the remote tropics of the Top End. Over the past 15 months this flame has spread south, east and west and across the continent thousands of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal supporters are taking action.

In February, over 2000 supporters were led by affected Aboriginal people in a convergence on parliament house on Ngunnawal and Walgalu Country (Canberra) calling for an immediate end to the NT Intervention, reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (RDA) and for Indigenous policy development guided by the principles of self-determination.

Anti-intervention collectives and working groups, actions and protests have erupted in every state and territory across the country. Organisations and service providers, unions and human rights commissions (including HREOC and NT anti-discrimination commission) have condemned the Intervention yet governments fail to retreat. Rudd and Macklin continue to moralise and demonise, showing the hollowness of their commitments to human rights, consultation and evidence-based policy design.

The next powerful message of uncompromising resistance was to be launched from the heartland of Australia, Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

Traditional owners of Mparntwe invited supporters nation-wide onto the powerful lands of Central Australia for another mass Convergence to coincide with the hand-over of report findings of the NT Intervention Review Panel to the federal government on 30th September.

Hundreds travelled to the open arms of the Mt Nancy 'town camp'.

For Top End mob, the epic journey began on Larrakia Country (Darwin) with a speak-out on Friday 26th September to launch the 2008 Freedom Rides convoy destined for Mparntwe. 43 years after the historic 1965 Freedom Rides, Indigenous people are still calling for an end to third world living conditions and institutional and societal racism.

Top End community leaders spoke strongly against the Intervention as they have since its implementation. In July, 53 Yolngu elders representing 8000 Yolngu people of North-East Arnhem Land presented Rudd and the Labour cabinet with demands to immediately end the Intervention and enshrine Indigenous Rights in the constitution.

Whilst it was difficult for a lot of Top End 'prescribed area' people to participate in the Freedom Rides and attend the Convergence, solidarity was strong and those community leaders unable to be there sent passionate statements of support. It was the climax of an accelerating campaign. The power of people sharing their stories, their pain and the excitement of knowing that all colours were coming together from across the continent to walk side by side for Indigenous rights inspired and gave hope to many Top End communities.

This continued as the Freedom Rides hosted a speak-out on Jawoyn Country (Katherine) drawing a crowd of over 50 people. This was a phenomenal turnout for the small town. Local Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people channelled their outrage about the Intervention, particularly about Income Management and the suspension of the RDA, through the microphone.

Norman George, the chairman of the Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), spoke out strongly. He emphasised the dangerous culture of racism developing in service delivery, particularly within police departments and the fact that to date not one criminal case related to child sexual abuse has been prosecuted. Instead teenagers in consensual relationships are being targeted for underage sex charges leading to

higher suicide rates in that demographic.

The distance to Mparntwe grew shorter and the Freedom Rides arrived to the warm welcoming of Barbara Shaw and her community at Mt Nancy 'town camp' just in time for the Prescribed Area's People's Alliance (PAPA) meeting the next morning.

PAPA brought over 100 affected Aboriginal people and elders from remote and urban communities across the NT together to share stories and support each other in their common struggle against the Intervention. After an information panel and open mic for story telling, the meeting spilt into men's and women's groups to discuss communications and strategy. The statement of the women's group can be found at **www.rollbacktheintervention.wordpress.com**

As a non-Aboriginal person, honoured to be invited to the meeting, I was beautifully overwhelmed by the depth of wisdom of the old people. Their words were like thunderous waves of truth and perspective: one old man said "They are not the government. You old people are the government. This is your land". Real truth speaks to your heart and the room trembled with the raw power of those words.

The streets of Alice Springs also trembled the next day as 400 people led by 'prescribed area' mob marched 3km to literally close 'the gap' – a naturally occurring break in the Macdonnell's Rangers where the Stuart Hwy pierces Alice Springs.

Despite the government announcement on the day that the Review had been extended for a month, its recommendations to be released late October, people marched under a blazing sun, blazing themselves after an inspiring and strong speak-out in town. The delay of the review was suspected to be an attempt to divert attention away from the convergence and silence the voices of 'prescribed area' people. Nevertheless mob from Central Australia and the Top End exposed the aggressive, disempowering and devastating reality of the Intervention to hundreds of supporters and bystanders. Elders from country outside of the NT and working groups from each state/territory pledged their support and ongoing commitment to fight against the Intervention. An Elder from Pembalong country (Newcastle) burned the Australian flag and constitution. Sovereignty has never been ceded!

While the heartland was pulsing with resistance, the rhythm of dissent was alive in Millingimbi, a remote island of NE Arnhem land. In solidarity with the convergence, senior Yolngu elders met at a cultural festival to develop resistance strategy to the Intervention in line with customary law. Recently, the island's police and Centrelink workers were invited into Yolngu Ngarra (secret sacred law) ceremony to show them that their complex law is strong, it's alive and it's being sabotaged by the Intervention. There has been a persistent call from Yolngu to integrate this law into any balanda (white fella) policy. For footage on the Ngarra ceremony with comments on the Intervention watch **www.youtube.com/watch?v=ytfqf1LWdQI**

Following the rally, convergers split into different groups to embark upon listening tours of urban and remote communities including Yuendumu and Mutitjulu, to witness first hand the entrenched poverty and disadvantage that has been further exacerbated by the Intervention. For many people, this was the first time they had visited an Aboriginal community, let alone confronted the frontline reality of genocidal policies such as the Intervention. It was truly revelatory and life-changing for everyone involved.

The Convergence on Mparntwe was not only an awesome demonstration of resistance to the aggressive colonial policy of dispossession and assimilation that is the Intervention but most importantly it brought hundreds of non-Aboriginal people to the hidden genocide sites of this continent and made blatant the absolute barbarity of Australian governments. Through the human contact and relationships with affected Aboriginal people, convergers have returned to their communities with a deeply honest understanding of what the Intervention is and will fight it hard in all corners of the continent. More importantly, the convergence has shown 'prescribed area' mob that there is far-reaching support and they are not alone in this struggle. Together we will stop this Intervention!

This fight will only intensify with the looming threat of a government agenda to withdraw funding from 'unviable' communities.

To get involved in anti-intervention organising:
Sydney: Stop the Intervention Collective Sydney meets 6.00pm Mondays,
in Room 355 in the Carslaw Building @ Sydney Uni

Melbourne: the Alliance for Indigenous Self-Determination meets 6.30 Mondays @
Friends of the Earth,316 Smith St, Collingwood

or http://rollbacktheintervention.wordpress.com

Noam Chomsky on the Financial Crisis of 2008

Excerpt from ZNet

Interview by Simone Bruno

I would like to talk about the current crisis. How is it that so many people could see it coming, but the people in charge of governments and economies didn't, or didn't prepare?

The basis for the crisis is predictable and it was in fact predicted. It is built into financial liberalisation that there will be frequent and deep crises. In fact, since financial liberalisation was instituted about thirty five years ago, there has been a trend of increasing regularity of crises and deeper crises, and the reasons are intrinsic and understood. They have to do fundamentally with well understood inefficiencies of markets. So, for example, if you and I make a transaction, say you sell me a car, we may make a good bargain for ourselves, but we don't take into account the effect on others. If I buy a car from you it increases the use of gas, it increases pollution, it increases congestion, and so on. But we don't count those effects. These are what are called by economists externalities, and are not counted into market calculations.

These externalities can be quite huge. In the case of financial institutions, they are particularly large. The task of a financial institution is to take risks. Now if it is a well managed financial institution, say Goldman Sachs, it will take into account risks to itself, but the crucial phrase here is to itself. It does not take into account systemic risks, risks to the whole system if Goldman Sachs takes a substantial loss. And what that means is that risks are underpriced. There are more risks taken than should be taken in an efficiently working system that was accounting for all the implications. More, this mispricing is simply built into the market system and the liberalisation of finance.

The consequences of underpricing risks are that risks become more frequent, and, when there are failures the costs are higher than taken into account. Crises become more frequent and also rise in scale as the scope and range of financial transactions increases. Of course, all this is increased still further by the fanaticism of the market fundamentalists who dismantled the regulatory apparatus and permitted the creation of exotic and opaque financial instruments. It is a kind of irrational fundamentalism because it is clear that weakening regulatory mechanisms in a market system has a built-in risk of disastrous crisis. These are senseless acts except in that they are in the short-term interest of the masters of the economy and of the society.

You couldn't predict the exact moment at which there would be a severe crisis, and you couldn't predict the exact scale of the crisis, but that one would come was obvious. In fact, there have been serious and repeated crises during this period of increasing deregulation. It is just that they hadn't yet hit so hard at the center of wealth and power before, but have instead hit mostly the third world. So, again, the crises are predictable and predicted. There was a book, for example, ten years ago, by two very well respected international economists, John Eatwell and Lance Taylor - Global Finance at Risk - in which they ran through the pretty elementary logic of how financial liberalisation underprices risk and therefore leads to regular systemic risks and failures, sometimes serious. They also outline ways of dealing with the problem, but those were ignored because decision makers in the corporate and

political systems, which are about the same, were making short term gains for themselves.

Take the United States. It is a rich country, but for the majority of the population, a substantial majority, the last thirty years have probably been among the worst in American economic history. There have been no massive crises, large wars, depressions, etc. But, nevertheless, real wages have pretty much stagnated for the majority for thirty years. In the international economy the effect of financial liberalisation has been quite harmful. You read in the press that the last thirty years, the thirty years of neoliberalsm, have shown the greatest escape from poverty in world history and tremendous growth and so on, and there is some truth to that, but what is missing is that the escape from poverty and the growth have taken place in countries which ignored the neoliberal rules. Countries that observed the neoliberal rules have suffered severely. So, there was great growth in East Asia, but they ignored the rules. In Latin America where they observed the rules rigorously, it was a disaster.

Joseph Stiglitz recently wrote in an article that the most recent crisis marks the end of neoliberalism and Chavez in a press conference said the crisis could be the end of capitalism. Which one is closer to the truth, do you think?

First, we should be clear about the fact that capitalism can't end because it never started. The system we live in should be called state capitalism, not just capitalism. So, take the United States. The economy relies very heavily on the state sector. There is a lot of agony now about socialisation of the economy, but that is a bad joke. The advanced economy, high technology and so forth, has always relied extensively on the dynamic state sector of the economy. That's true of computers, the internet, aircraft, biotechnology, just about everywhere you look. MIT, where I am speaking to you, is a kind of funnel into which the public pours money and out of it comes the technology of the future which will be handed over to private power for profit. So what you have is a system of socialisation of cost and risk and privatisation of profit. And that's not just in the financial system. It is the whole advanced economy.

So, for the financial system it will probably turn out pretty much as Stiglitz describes. It is the end of a certain era of financial liberalisation driven by market fundamentalism. The Wall Street Journal laments that Wall Street as we have known it is gone with the collapse of the investment banks. And there will be some steps toward regulation. So that's true. But the proposals that are being made, which are major and severe, nonetheless do not change the structure of the underlying basic institutions. There is no threat to state capitalism. Its core institutions will remain basically unchanged and even unshaken. They may rearrange themselves in various ways with some conglomerates taking over others and some even being semi-nationalised in a weak sense, without infringing much on private monopolisation of decision making. Still, as things stand now, property relations and the distribution of power and wealth won't alter much though the era of neoliberalism operative for roughly thirty five years will surely be modified in a significant fashion.

Incidentally, no one knows how serious this crisis will become. Every day brings new surprises. Some economists are predicting real catastrophe. Others think that it can be patched together with modest disruption and a recession, likely worse in Europe than in the U.S. But no one knows.

Do you think we will see anything like the depression, with people out of working and cuing up in long lines for food. Do you think it is possible we could have that kind of situation in the U.S. and Europe? Would a big war then get economies back on track, or shock therapy or what?

Well, I don't think the situation is anything like the period of the great depression. There are some similarities to that era, yes. The 1920s were also a period of wild speculation and vast expansion of credit and borrowing, creating of tremendous concentration of wealth in a very small sector of the population, destruction of the labor movement. These are all similarities to today. But there are also many differences. There is a much more stable apparatus of control and regulation growing out of the New Deal [a set of programs US President Roosevelt initiated to recover from the Great Depression] and though it has been eroded, much of it is still there. And also by now there is an understanding that the kinds of policies that seemed extremely radical in the New Deal period are more or less normal.

There is a tremendous amount of mythology to be dismantled here, including the talk about the great growth and escape from poverty which, as I said earlier, isn't false, but is missing the fact that it took place overwhelmingly in areas that ignored the neoliberal rules, while the areas that kept to the rules are the ones that suffered. The same holds in the U.S. To the extent that the neoliberal rules were applied, it was quite harmful to the majority of the population. So to talk about these matters, we first have to sweep away a lot of mythology and then, when we look, we see that a state capitalist economy that has, particularly since the Second World War, relied very heavily on the state sector, is now returning to reliance on the state sector to manage the collapsing financial system, its collapse being the predictable result of financial liberalisation. The underlying institutional structure itself is being modified, but not in fundamental ways.

There is no indication right now that there will be anything like the crash of 1929.

Now that we are at the end of neoliberal globalisation, is there a possibility of something really new, a good globalisation?

I think the prospects are much better than they have been. Power is still incredibly concentrated, but there are changes with the international economy becoming more diverse and complex. The [Global] South is becoming more independent. But if you look at the U.S., even with all the damage Bush has done, it is still the biggest homogeneous economy, with the largest internal market, the strongest and technologically most advanced military force, with annual expenses comparable to the rest of the world combined, and an archipelago of military bases throughout the world. These are sources of continuity even though the neoliberal order is eroding both within the U.S. and Europe and internationally, as there is more and more opposition to it. So there are opportunities for real change, but how far they will go depends on people, what we are willing to undertake.

Ok, so we stole it.... after all we're only human... and anarchists - but to read it in full, check-out:
http://www.zcommunications.org/znet/viewArticle/19111

The Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committee invites you to……

Protest the Land Warfare Conference in Brisbane

"River city to host conference on the best ways to make a killing"

Brisbane will be hosting the 2008 Land Warfare Conference from Oct 27-31, 2008. The conference, themed *Force Protection in the 21st Century – Deter, Detect, Disrupt and Defeat* will see some of the world's largest and most lethal military manufacturers exhibiting their wares and working alongside military officials to plan more efficient ways to wage war.

The Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committee has been set up to oppose this conference and is calling for it to be cancelled. It is our belief that the Land Warfare Conference is a continuation of Australia's unnecessary spiralling towards militarism/ militarisation/perpetual war- and down a path essentially led by US interests. We call on the Australian government (and the state governments sponsoring this event) to divest their funding from military might and to invest in a future that will leave something positive for future generations: social justice, education, welfare, the environment, and peace.

We invite individuals and organisations to endorse this statement and to join us in taking action.

The Land Warfare Conference is the Australian Army's annual planning and strategy meeting. Once exclusively involving Defence Force and government personnel it has been opened up to allow private sector participation. In the last week of October, heads of Army will meet with big business and academics to discuss Army strategy and policy with particular emphasis on its involvement in the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Arms dealers will be able to pitch their products of death and destruction directly to the conference allowing aspects of army policy to be set by the public relations and advertising campaigns of arms dealers.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians and soldiers have been killed in the illegal and unjustifiable occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and these vultures of free enterprise are sitting in the driver's seat ready to take as much profit as they can. We've got a better plan for the Australian Defence Force - bring all the troops home from Iraq and Afghanistan now!

Last month the South Australian Government called off hosting the Asia Pacific Defence and Security Exhibition in November because it didn't want the embarrassment of protestors from across the country highlighting the close relationship the Rann government wants to establish with arms dealers. The Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committee plans to generate similar scrutiny and public awareness of what will be happening inside the Convention Centre on October 27-31.

The Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committee is calling for action in opposition to the conference throughout the last week of October. We encourage people from around Australia who oppose these wars and the companies who profit from them to come and join us in loud and colourful protest.

Join us - and play your part in bringing the warmongering to an end!

For more information or to indicate your support for the planned protests please contact:

Hamish on 0401 586 923 or Robin on 0411 118 737

Email: lwcwelcoming@gmail.com

Or visit: www.landwarfareconference2008.blogspot.com

THE IRAQI SLAUGHTER & THE CASE FOR AUSTRALIAN WAR CRIMES TRIALS

By Chris Doran and Tim Anderson

How many people do you have to kill before you qualify to be described as a mass murderer and a war criminal? One hundred thousand? More than enough, I would have thought. -Harold Pinter

Five years after the invasion of Iraq, two independent estimates found that between 600,000 and 1.2 million Iraqis had died ("excess deaths") as a direct result of that invasion. Another study backed by the post-2003 Iraqi regime accepted that there were at least 151,000 "violent deaths" in Iraq between March 2003 and June 2006. These 'excess' or 'violent' deaths fall into two broad categories: those killed by the invading and occupying forces and those killed in the turmoil associated with the occupation. Senior Australian officials have been directly involved in the former and indirectly in the latter. The moral imperative, therefore, is that those same officials must be amongst the first to be held accountable. It would be an insult to the Iraqi people to say that this accountability should be anything less than criminal.

We know that the pretext for invasion - rationales of an imminent threat from the regime of Saddam Hussein - were false and that the invasion was illegal. Yet, so far, no-one has been held responsible for the mass slaughter. Persons implicated in lesser scale massacres in the Balkans have been prosecuted for war crimes. However, while there have been two attempts to indict former US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and moves to hold Bush administration officials responsible for policies of systematic torture, no legal moves have been made against those Australian officials responsible for the Iraqi slaughter.

Australian responsibility: the massacres at Fallujah

A case providing detailed evidence for the war crimes prosecution of Australian officials is their direct responsibility for the brutal assaults on Fallujah in late 2004. There are numerous and well documented allegations of atrocities committed under the direct command of Australian Major General Jim Molan. Noam Chomsky describes these allegations as "far more severe than the [Abu Ghraib] torture scandals".

Molan was seconded from the ADF to US Forces in April 2004, and served as the Coalition's Chief of Operations through 2005. He was the third highest ranking Coalition military officer in Iraq, was responsible for planning and directing the Coalition's overall "counter-terrorism" operations and had direct command of 140,000 Coalition (nearly all US) and 130,000 Iraqi troops. In an August 2005 feature article, the Australian reported that Molan "ran all military and non military operations at the strategic level for all forces, Iraqi and coalition, across Iraq, including the bitter fighting last year for Najaf, Fallujah, and Samarra." The article emphasises that Molan not only planned, but also directed, the late 2004 assault on Fallujah.

The US-led coalition had previously attacked Fallujah in April 2004. It seems that Molan was not directly involved in this attack. The second assault, codenamed Operation Phantom Fury, like the first, was to clear out suspected Sunni insurgents who were allegedly using the city as a base for attacks on Coalition troops. Citizens were instructed to evacuate the city, population 250,000, before the attack began, but men aged fifteen to forty five were prohibited from leaving. Many family members chose to stay with their

fathers and brothers. An estimated 30,000 to 50,000 civilians remained in Fallujah when the attack began in October, 2004, with bombing that lasted several weeks. Once the bombing began, all exits out of the city were sealed off.

According to the Washington Post, "electricity and water were cut off to the city just as a fresh wave of [bombing] strikes began Thursday night, an action that U.S. forces also took at the start of assaults on Najaf and Samarra". The Red Cross and other aid agencies were also denied access to deliver the most basic of humanitarian aid- water, food, and emergency medical supplies. The UN's Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, Jean Ziegler, later said the Coalition was using "hunger and deprivation of water as a weapon of war against the civilian population [in] flagrant violation" of the Geneva Conventions.

Cutting off water, electricity, and denying access to humanitarian aid is prohibited in Article 14 of the Geneva Conventions: "Starvation of civilians as a method of combat is prohibited. It is therefore prohibited to attack, destroy, remove, or render useless for the purpose, objects indispensable to the survival of the civilian population."

On November 7, the Coalition launched the ground campaign by seizing Fallujah's only hospital. A New York Times front page story stated that "patients and hospital employees were rushed out of the rooms by armed soldiers and ordered to sit or lie on the floor while troops tied their hands behind their backs." The story also revealed the motive for attacking the hospital: "The offensive also shut down what officers said was a propaganda weapon for the militants: Fallujah General Hospital with its stream of reports of civilian casualties". The city's two medical clinics were also bombed and destroyed. Independent journalist Dahr Jamail interviewed scores of Fallujah survivors after the assault. He documented eye witness accounts of US troops denying the Red Cross entry to Fallujah to deliver medical aid, and firing on ambulances trying to enter the city. The fourth Geneva Convention strictly forbids attacks on hospitals, medical emergency vehicles and any impeding of medical operations.

Further war crimes occurred when US and Iraqi troops entered Fallujah. Jamail reports first hand accounts of US snipers shooting women and children in the streets; unarmed men shot while seeking safe passage with their wives and children under a white flag; photographers shot as they filmed battle. And in images beamed around the world on November 9, a U.S marine was shown to approach a wounded man, fire, and move away, saying "He's done".

Other serious war crimes committed under Molan's command are indicated by evidence from the US military. Chemical weapons were used in the attack on Fallujah. US soldiers wrote in a military journal that white phosphorous was such "an effective and versatile munition" that the military "saved our WP for lethal missions". After strenuous denial, U.S. Colonel Barry Venable admitted on November 15, 2005 that, "Yes, it was used an incendiary weapon against enemy combatants". In a November 2005 editorial denouncing its use, the New York Times described white phosphorous: "Packed into an artillery shell, it explodes over a battlefield in a white glare that can illuminate an enemy's positions. It also rains balls of flaming chemicals, which cling to anything they touch and burn until their oxygen supply is cut off. They can burn for hours inside a human body."

It was Saddam Hussein's use of white phosphorous on Kurdish rebels that was one of the primary justifications for the invasion. Protocol III of the UN Convention on Certain Weapons Which May Be Deemed to be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects bans the use of incendiary weapons against military targets in areas with a concentration of civilians".

The Protocol has been signed by 94 countries, including Australia, but not the US.

Relatively few insurgents were found once the city was subdued; most had fled the city long before the assault began. Meanwhile an estimated 70% of the city was utterly destroyed, with thousands dead.

Under the international legal doctrine of 'command responsibility', a commander can be held liable if they knew, or should have known, that anyone under their command was committing war crimes and they failed to prevent them. The consistency and similarity of the attacks at Najaf, Samarra, and Fallujah display a deliberate disregard for civilian casualties in the planning and implementation of those military assaults. By Molan's own admission, he was responsible for not only planning, but also directing, these attacks. It is not conceivable that Molan was unaware of the serious and well documented accusations of atrocities being committed under his command. The same applies to the senior Australian ministers to whom Molan was directly accountable: former ADF Chief General Peter Cosgrove and former government ministers including Defence Minister Robert Hill, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and Prime Minister John Howard.

Conclusion: the case for Australian trials

War crimes legislation, at national and international levels, has been significantly strengthening since the 1998 Statute of Rome and the rise of the International Criminal Court. Australian officials, lawyers and citizens have a responsibility to test the legal instruments available to them and to bring their own war criminals to justice. Such prosecutions can help address the justice demands arising from the Iraqi slaughter and act to deter future aggressive interventions and atrocities. Inaction, on the other hand, can only engender cynicism and cultures of impunity. However, to be effective, war crimes prosecutions must be well considered and precisely framed.

As it happens, the best legal instruments available in Australian law, which must be tested before there is recourse to international process, are laws created by the Howard regime: new sections of the Criminal Code Act 1995 which criminalise terrorist acts done (inter alia) "with the intention of advancing a political … cause" and with the intention of "coercing … the government of … [a] foreign country … [or] intimidating the public". In addition, new sections of the same act incorporate a long series of war crimes, including the murder of civilians, provisions listed in the Geneva Conventions. Specific acts which could be included in an indictment against senior Australian officials include Australian air force backing for the widespread use of cluster bombs in civilian areas by US ground troops, during the 2003 invasion, and Australian command of 'coalition' forces which actively slaughtered civilian populations in the Iraqi city of Fallujah in 2004.

The ongoing nature of the occupation and 'war' in Iraq makes accountability more urgent. There appears a real risk that a Labor administration in Canberra may participate further in the Iraqi slaughter. They should be reminded that their predecessor's errors were not policy mistakes, but grave crimes. They should be warned not to continue participating in such crimes. Australian military and government officials must be held accountable for their role in the slaughter of many thousands of innocent Iraqi people. Well considered indictments against these officials should be pursued as soon as possible in Australian courts, as part of the international process.

Find more at:

http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7710

Jim Molan released a book in August called "Running the War on Iraq" on his experiences commanding many of the allied forces in Iraq.

REVIEWS

What a Carve Up!
By Jonathan Coe

A friend gave me this book. After I'd read it I gave it to my dad to read, who has now given it to someone else. When it came into my possession the cover was hanging from the spine by the tiniest strip of paper. By the time I'd finished with it the cover was gone altogether. I'm sure that it'll continue to be read and passed on until it has disintegrated beyond all legibility, because this, ladies and gentlemen, to quote my father, is "the fucking greatest book ever".

At the centre of the story is Michael Owen, writer and official biographer to the Winshaws: an old money family of art barons, arms dealers, media hacks, factory farmers and political schemers, whose influence extends everywhere and is at the centre of everything. The Winshaws are archetypal baddies and the gist of the book is to reveal how the avariciousness and get-it-at-any-cost-and-fuck-the-consequences ruthlessness of individuals like them is directly - responsible for the ordinary, everyday suffering of others, from the apparently small things like having to eat shit food, read shit news and consume shit culture (hang on, did I just say they were small things?) to the very big, like death, either through war or undermining things like access to health care.

Coe's genius is to use what at first seems a quite complicated framing device (events in the book follow the plot of a 1961 film of the same name and the story jumps back and forth between Michael's first person narration and extracts from his Winshaw biography) to reveal the connections between the Winshaws and the results of their actions, so that you read with knowing dread. While it's also very, very funny, Coe regularly stops the laughs just as they're rising with the full realisation of these connections.

And of course, there is a double meaning in the title. The first refers to the Winshaws' carve it up and sell it off approach to the world around them. The second I won't reveal, except to assure you that it's immensely satisfying.

- Pollycarp

Persepolis
Directed by Vincent Paronnaud & Marjane Satrapi

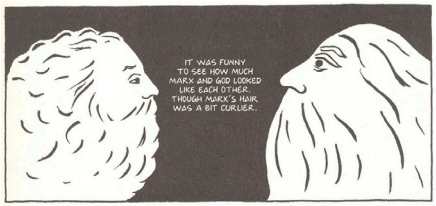
This film is based on Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novels. The animation really captures her distinctive drawing style: mostly black & white, with a simplicity that is elegant & cartoonish in turn. It also captures the spirit of the books remarkably well.

The film tells the story of a girl growing up in Iran under the Shah, through the revolution, & under the reign of Ayatollah Khomeini. It's a history lesson, but an incomplete one: for someone like me, who is ignorant of Iranian history (except for what I've learnt from Starapi) it's not clear how the revolution, which seems to start off well enough, with left-wing support, & with good reason, ended up with the country in dictatorship & war. (Though there are some cartoon-history lessons about Western imperialism & the pursuit of oil in Iran.)

But even if the film doesn't explain all the reasons why political changes happened, it powerfully portrays their everyday effects. It shows the many small ways in which people resisted, & the risks they ran: buying black-market cassettes on the street, bending the dress code, having house parties or speaking up in class. And although it shows people's bravery, the cahracters aren't comic-book heros: there are also incidents of betrayal.

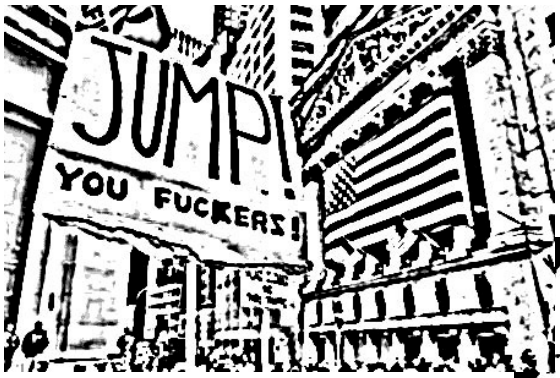
While pop music, alcohol & clothes become signs of freedom, because of their suppression by the regime, Persepolis doesn't set up a dichotomy between unfree Iran & the free West: when Satrapi travels to Europe she finds problems there too.

This political synopsis doesn't begin to explain the film's sense of fun & charm, especially in Satrapi's imagination & her relationship with her grandmother (who is a role model for us all).



(Ok, this bit from the comic isn't in the film, but Marx does make a guest appearance)

- Princess Mob



This Month

An account of the Freedom Rides convoy as it hoons towards a mass-convergence in Mparntwe (Alice Springs), fighting to prevent a PMD (Policy of Mass Destruction) from destroying Aboriginal communities.

Chris Doran and Tim Anderson charges Major General Molan as a war criminal for the massacres in Iraq.

News on Lex Wotton's trial, the Barwon 13 trial, low-wage workers actions, virtual strip search, and an inevitable riot in a dehumanising prison.

Financial Crisis: Some insight into the latest capitalist crisis, and the effects of deregulation.

An invite from the Land Warfare Conference Welcoming Committee to link arms and stop the armstrade in Brisbane on October 27-31.

Reviews of *What a Carve Up!* by Jonathon Coe, and the animated *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi & Vincent Paronnaud.